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Statement delivered to the Fourth Committee of

the United Nations General Assembly

on East Timor

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Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates:

It is with a profound sense of sadness that I speak before the Fourth Committee of the United Nations today on the question of East Timor, for I am obliged to criticize the government of a country, Indonesia, which I have studied, loved and learned from for over twenty years. But believing that the delegates have already heard much from other witnesses about what has happened from the point of view of the East Timorese, I feel that it may be more useful, and ultimately constructive, to address the issue from the perspective of Indonesia, though not of its present rulers.

It is imperative to understand that the Suharto government's attempted annexation of East Timor has had devastating consequences not only for that country, but also for Indonesia, and that this government's misrepresentation of the true facts to the outside world has been matched by no less serious misrepresentations to its own people.

Indonesian nationalism has long been a deep and powerful force, sufficient to sustain the country through over thirty years of political, and five years of armed struggle against Dutch colonialism. At no point in that long struggle for independence; nor under the liberal parliamentary regime of 1950-59 when freedom of expression was virtually complete for all groups; nor under President Sukarno's Guided Democracy of 1959-65, with its commitment to militant anti-colonialism; nor during the first decade of General Suharto's regime, did <u>any</u> significant group express the slightest interest in Portugal's remote Southeast Asian colony. Only when this 400-year old colony threatened to free itself from colonialism, thirty years after Indonesia's proclamation of its own independence, did a Jakarta government decide to intervene. This historical record shows

that it is utterly false to claim that the "annexation" of East Timor is a response to deeply-felt, long-standing ties of national brotherhood. (And one might add that if Jakarta's "brotherhood" claims are to be accepted at face value there are at least as good so-called ethnic grounds for annexing East and West Malaysia, some of the southern provinces of Thailand, Papua New Guinea, and most of the Philippines.)

The utter irrelevance of the attempted annexation to Indonesian popular nationalism is signally demonstrated by the Suharto government's domestic handling of the issue, and by a variety of other evidence that I will shortly present. While Jakarta's closing of East Timor to foreign correspondents since the initial invasion of December 7, 1975 -- broken only briefly and damagingly at the beginning of this year -- is well known, a more significant indication of its bad conscience has been the even tighter internal censorship of and control over news about the realities of East Timor. From 1975 to the present the Indonesian mass media have steadily been obliged to maintain the palpable fiction that East Timor was rescued from radical Fretilin insurrectionaries by loyal East Timorese integrationists and brotherly Indonesian "volunteers." Virtually nothing has been reported to the Indonesian public about the fierce counter-insurgency campaigns of 1977-79 which may have cost the lives, by violence, disease and malnutrition, of 200,000 East Timorese "brothers." More telling still, although the Jakarta forces have lost at least 2,000 dead, and possibly as many as 10,000 wounded, these -- and indeed any casualty figures -- let alone the names of the dead, have been kept secret. Though these losses are the Indonesian military's most severe since the national revolution, the families of the dead and wounded have been left to nurse their grief in bitter silence: there have been no public ceremonies for the fallen or bestowal of decorations for valor in action. Yet at the same time, military operations involving

30,000 troops, aerial bombardments, naval shellings and blockades, and the virtual internment of tens of thousands of East Timorese in so-called "resettlement" camps, could not be kept entirely from the unofficial grapevine inside Indonesia. The real reactions of different groups of Indonesian to the calamity in East Timor is revealed by: horrified reports circulating within the Indonesian Catholic clergy; semi-standardized bribes paid by military men to personnel officers to avoid service in East Timor; reports of fragging of officers by their men; and the recent description of the East Timorese nationalists by a top Indonesian student leader, during his trial on trumped-up charges of insulting President Suharto, as comrades in the struggle against oppression by the Indonesian government.

Diplomatically, the cost of the East Timor adventure to Indonesia has been very high. For a nation intensely, and rightly, proud of acting as host to the historic first Conference of Non-Aligned Nations at Bandung in 1955, and of the late President Sukarno's prominent role in the world-wide fight against colonialism, it has been an enormous humiliation to have the claimed "integration" of East Timor repeatedly repudiated by the U.N. General Assembly, and, at the most recent Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Havana, to find only 7 out of 93 delegations supporting its claim. Even the United States, so far Jakarta's firmest diplomatic and military supporter, has been forced to concede publicly that no valid exercise of the East Timorese people's right to determine their own future has ever taken place. A well-respected scholar-official of the U.S. State Department has gone so far as to write that "Our initial response to the East Timor case was probably indefensible on legal grounds." These stinging rebuffs have been impossible to conceal from the Indonesian people, and the

Suharto government has been at a total loss to offer its people any plausible, or creditable, explanation.

East Timor has come to pose no less serious economic than military and diplomatic problems. In part, these are "local" tragedies arising from Jakarta's initial invasion and later counter-insurgency campaigns. Last December 4, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke told the U.S. Congress that, at that time, no less than 200,000 people in East Timor (over one third of the entire population) were living in what he and Jakarta call "resettlement areas." The real nature of these resettlement areas was revealed by New York Times correspondent Henry Kamm's January 1980 interview with an agricultural specialist working with the Indonesian military in East Timor, who said that the plan for removing and concentrating these people had been drawn up "largely for strategic reasons, placing the population where the army can control it." He added that "the resettlement project will make East Timor permanently dependent on food imports." Coffee, traditionally East Timor's main foreign exchange earner, has, since the invasion, been monopolized, warlord style, by a company called P.T.Denog Hernandez International, dominated by General Dading Kalbuadi, commander of the Indonesian invasion forces. Coffee bought up from East Timorese farmers at from 30-40¢ a kilogram has been resold in Jakarta for as much as $13 a kilogram. The devastation has been such that in the last year at least $9,000,000 have had to be contributed by outside agencies for emergency relief. If all this were not enough, the Suharto government, which has repeatedly tried to justify its actions by claiming that East Timor is not economically viable and cannot support its population, has recently designated the region a transmigration zone where peasants from Indonesia will be relocated.

With doubtless unconscious irony, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Manpower, Transmigration, and Cooperatives, Mr. Urip Widodo, stated last January 14 that "It is impossible to develop this vast province with the small number of people living there." In fact it is clear that the transmigration program is to serve not economic needs, but a political strategy: the physical Javanization of East Timor.

Yet the economic costs are not being borne by the people of East Timor alone. The people of Indonesia also have been, and will in the future be, the losers. If East Timor becomes permanently dependent on food imports as a result of Jakarta's policies, those imports will only add to Indonesia's already huge external food deficit. In 1977-78, Indonesia had to import 2.6 million tons of rice -- about one third of the total amount of rice on the world market -- as well as one million tons of wheat. Today, rice-growing Indonesia is the world's largest importer of rice, and is likely to continue to be so. Aside from the heavy financial costs of counter-insurgency campaigns and military occupation, any serious attempt to "develop" East Timor by Jakarta will mean further difficulties for a population whose daily per capita income is around 60¢. "Development" of East Timor will mean diversion of resources from an Indonesian society, where life expectancy is 48 years, where real wages for agricultural labor have been declining for a decade, and where the lowest 20% of income earners gleans 7% of total income, while the top 5% gains almost 34%. On December 4, 1979, the American Ambassador to Jakarta, Mr. Edward Masters, told the U.S. Congress that:

> The neighboring province of East Nusa Tenggara ... [is] in the best of times,...one of the poorest parts of Indonesia. It has the lowest per capita income in the nation--

> barely $32 per year [i.e. about 10¢ a day]...
> Sixty percent of [its] pre-school children...suffer
> from malnutrition.

Can an Indonesian population of this kind, already saddled with over $15 billion dollars in outstanding external debts, and still reeling from the bankruptcy, with over $10.5 billion in debts of the military-controlled state oil company Pertamina -- a disaster which one expert has called "the greatest peacetime financial loss ever suffered by one country relative to national income"-- endure all the additional burdens of the East Timor adventure?

Finally, at various times, and to various audiences, the Jakarta government has suggested that its actions in East Timor have been taken with Indonesia's security interests at heart. How sincere this concern has been from the very start can be judged by then Foreign Minister, now Vice President, Adam Malik's light-hearted letter to Fretilin representative Mr. Jose Ramos Horta in 1974, in which he specifically said that independence was the right of every country "with no exception for the people of Timor," adding that Indonesia had no ambitions in East Timor, and sought good relations with "whoever will govern East Timor in the future after independence." Can we really suppose that Mr. Malik would have been permitted such a written statement if Indonesia's security had honestly been thought to be threatened? A further clear proof of Jakarta's insincerity in this regard is that its main arms purchases over the past five years have been Rockwell OV-10s, F5E jets, and, most recently, A-4 Skyhawks. Of all these planes it could be said what an American official has recently written of the Skyhawks, namely that they are "ground-support aircraft of no conceivable use except against insurgents and as a symbol of military

modernization." In other words, all of these purchases have been made, not to defend Indonesians from any credible external threat, but to annex a country that, in the words of Rear Admiral Gene La Rocque to the U.S. Congress, "is too small, poor, and under-developed to be a military threat to anyone in the foreseeable future."

In summary, then, I believe the facts and the record show that the attempted annexation of East Timor represents nothing more than the short-sighted aggrandizement of the small military-dominated clique that now rules in Jakarta. The policy commands negligible popular support and is in violation of long-standing nationalist tradition. It has proved extremely costly to Indonesians, if not their government, in terms of a damaged international reputation, of lives lost, of families stricken, and of economic suffering, and is certain to continue do so. Nor has it served any genuine Indonesian security interests. Although theSuharto government has, more or less off the record, expressed fears that an independent East Timor might serve as a base for "communist aggression," the Fourth Committee is doubtless well aware that: Jakarta's relations with the Soviet Union are sufficiently cordial that it receives significant aid from Moscow; that a reopening of relations with the Chinese People's Republic is rumored to be imminent; and that General Benny Murdani, architect of the East Timor aggression, recently visited the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to act as "honest broker" between Hanoi and the ASEAN states on the question of Kampuchea.

Once we recognize that the occupation of East Timor in no conceivable sense represents any real national interest of Indonesia's 143,000,000 population, what then can and should be done to end it? If the Fourth Committee will permit me,

I would like to make the following three proposals:

1. That the Committee and the General Assembly, firmly maintain their principled stand on the East Timorese people's right to self-determination, and their repudiation of the Suharto government's attempted annexation.

To underscore the cogency of my second proposal, I would like to remind the Committee, and above all the delegate of Indonesia, of a precedent set by the United Nations of ironic relevance in this context. During their bitter fight for independence between 1945 and 1949, the Indonesian nation found in the United Nations not only a desperately needed forum for the expression of its aspirations to independence, but also diplomatic and moral support of incalculable value -- support, may I add, that the Indonesian people have never forgotten. Dismissed by the Dutch authorities as the representative of an extremist minority, Indonesia's former Prime Minister, Sutan Sjahrir, was yet permitted to plead his country's cause before the Untied Nations at Lake Success. And, in the face of so-called military faits accomplis by the Dutch, was thereby able to assist the United Nations in a historical reversal. In late 1948, Dutch colonial forces occupied every major urban center in Indonesia, and declared the "insurgency" over -- just as the present Jakarta colonial forces have occupied East Timorese "urban" centers, and declared the East Timorese "insurgency" over. But just one year later, Dutch and Indonesian governments were signing the accords which formally transferred sovereignty to the Indonesian people. If we ask what made this historic reversal possible, the answer, I think, is a combination of four things, all of which have direct application to what I believe must today be a parallel reversal on East Timor: the power of world opinion, as manifested in the United Nations; Indonesian resistance; a growing bad conscience among the Dutch; and the friendly pressure of Holland's allies.

With this brief "flashback" as a frame of reference, I would proffer as my second proposal that the Fourth Committee, and the General Assembly, use its Good Offices to encourage the government of Portugal to resume, temporarily and in all disinterestedness, its decolonizing responsibilities. Surely, after colonizing the people of East Timor for more than four centuries, the people of Portugal feel a moral obligation not to surrender them cynically to another colonialism? I believe that the generally constructive role played by Lisbon since 1974 in the decolonization of its former African colonies, confirms my faith. In addition, recent statements by the democratically-elected government of Portugal point in the same promising direction. Should Lisbon resume responsibility for a speedy, orderly, and democratic decolonization of East Timor, I am confident that its recent record gives every evidence that this task will be fairly performed. The fact that democratic Portugal has broken off relations with the military government in Jakarta since the 1975 invasion and has refused to relinquish its legal responsibilities in East Timor is additional evidence for this view. I am sure that all parties in East Timor would be willing, if the United Nations lent its good offices, to have the Portuguese resume their decolonizing functions for sufficient time to permit a free exercise of the East Timorese people's right to determine their own future. Indeed, I believe that Portugal owes them no less. Surely if Portugal requested the assistance of the United Nations in carrying out this responsibility, both the United Nations as whole, and the East Timorese people,would warmly welcome such assistance.

3. My third proposal relates to Indonesia' friends and allies. As in 1948-9, so in 1980-1, the role of the colonizing power's allies is of great importance.

In the earlier period, an on-the-whole constructive role was played by Holland's key ally, the United States. Today, the state whose assistance is most urgently needed is, once again, the United States. In 1948-9, the United States finally acted, not only in accordance with decent world opinion, but on the basis of its own enormous financial and military contributions to the Dutch. By 1949, almost all the costs of Holland's attempted colonial reconquest were being underwritten by America. Washington eventually made it clear that this assistance could not, and would not, be continued if there were not a substantial change in Dutch policy. By a melancholy historical irony, the United States today has come to play a role vis-a-vis Jakarta that parallels its earlier role with The Hague. By the U.S. State Department's frank admission, the initial invasion of East Timor was done with 95% American equipment, and in clear-cut violation of the 1958 U.S.-Indonesian bilateral arms agreement. All major arms acquisitions by Jakarta since 1975 have come from the United States, and the bulk of these have taken the form of counterinsurgency equipment. If America is alone in its key contributions to Jakarta's military power, it shares with Japan the leading role in developing its economic resources. 60% of Indonesia's total foreign trade is with America and Japan. 85% of all oil investment in Indonesia since 1967 has been American. The United States and Japan, together with the World Bank, have provided the overwhelming bulk of the more than $15 billions in aid that the Suharto government has received since 1967. And only the U.S. and Japan, of the leading industrial democracies, have given diplomatic recognition and support to Jakarta's colonial aggression. (None of the United States' Western European allies has followed its example.)

Surely it is not asking too much for the United States and Japan to use their influence in a constructive fashion, just as the U.S. did thirty years ago, to align themselves with world opinion and common human decency, and use their good offices to persuade the Suharto government to accede to a free expression of the East Timorese people's wishes for their political status, guaranteed by the United Nations, and administered by Portugal. Should, contrary to my judgment, Jakarta have genuine security concerns in East Timor, there is absolutely no reason why such interests could not be satisfied in the process of civilized negotiations between the respective parties, supervised by the United Nations.

It would be dishonest to deny that the process that I have outlined would not mean some loss of face for the Suharto government, just as The Hague Accords of 1949 involved some loss of face for the Dutch government of the day. But I have always understood that the Fourth Committee, like the General Assembly, takes the long and deep view, and thinks of peoples more than passing regimes. The Dutch government that "lost face" in 1949 has vanished into history. Contrary to many conventional expectations at the time, the Dutch economy after 1949, far from going into a decline with the loss of its huge Asian colonial possession, began an era of unprecedented, accelerating prosperity. The psychological poison and the economic drain of the colonial relationship removed, Holland's internal politics became more harmonious and democratic, allowing it, in the 1960s and 1970s, to develop a wholly new, friendly, and cooperative relationship with its former colony. Similarly, there is every reason to believe that, in the longer historical perspective, the loss of face

for a transient Suharto government will quickly become a dim historical memory. Like the Dutch, the Indonesian people will benefit, not suffer, from a reversal of colonial policy. Liquidation of the East Timor colonial adventure will remove some of the poison in Indonesia's own domestic politics, and should make possible, in the not-too-distant future, a friendly, harmonious, and decent relationship between the peoples of Indonesia and of East Timor.

I sincerely believe that the proposals I have outlined above are eminently practicable, consistent with the mandate of this Committee and the U.N. Charter, and in the long term interest of every nation involved. To be sure, the immediate intersts of the small group of men who now hold power in Jakarta may be adversely affected: yet we may remember that the man who in 1974 said that Indonesia would seek good relations with "whoever will govern in Timor in the future after independence" is Vice President of Indonesia today. In any case, the people of Indonesia will be there long after Suharto and his associates are gone. It behooves this Committee above all, concerned as it is with peoples, millions of ordinary human beings, beyond any temporary government or regime, to stick by its principles, and to think about the long-term future rather than momentary exigencies. I earnestly request the Committee to play the constructive and humane role which it is uniquely mandated to perform, and, in general outline, if not in specific demarches, follow through on the proposals that I have just submitted to it.